

DEDICATED TO OUR COMMUNITY, OUR PROFESSION AND EACH OTHER

Winter 2011

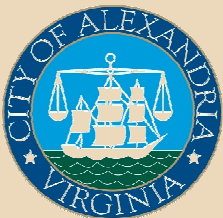


Fire in The Sky	1
Seconds Do Count	2
They Come In Threes	3
EMS News	4
Breaking Up is Hard to Do	5
New Faces, Old Places	6
Community Engagement	7
Awards and Recognition	10
Stats	11
Hot Shots	12

Alexandria Fire Department
900 Second Street
Alexandria, VA 22314
703.746.5200

*This newsletter written and
compiled by:*
Chief Fire Marshal Bob Rodriguez
PIO / Community Services Officer

On the web!
www.alexandriava.gov/fire



THE RESPONDER

Fire in The Sky



Battalion Chief Mike Brown radios instructions to fire crews working on the fire ground at the Virginia Theological Seminary.
Photo by Liz King

A clear and sunny day on October 22 reflected one of the few remaining Indian summer days left in autumn, 2010. May people spent the day outside whenever possible to enjoying the mild temperatures. Visibility in the Washington area was unlimited and many area news service cameras scanned the horizon for the best picture for their evening weather broadcasts. While scanning the landscape around 4pm, several cameras picked up a large column of smoke coming from Alexandria. As the news services started to call Fire Communica-

tions to inquire what the source of the smoke was, 911 calls began to flood the emergency lines.

Within a matter of minutes, Alexandria fire companies, joined by fire crews from Arlington and Fairfax Counties, engaged a fire at the Virginia Theological Seminary that was one of the largest fires in recent City history. Thirteen Engine Companies, Four Truck Companies, Two Heavy Rescue Companies, a number of Specialty Units and Command Staff totaling 92 firefighters fought a fire that quickly consumed the his-

toric Chapel at the Virginia Theological Seminary and was threatening the adjacent Meade Hall and a faculty residence. The fire raged on for hours. Firefighters utilized master streams via ladder pipes to deploy thousands of gallons of water into the Chapel in an attempt to save the structure and the artifacts located within. Within an hour of firefighting operations, the slate roof began to collapse, dropping burning timbers down onto the pews below

SEE SKY, PAGE 8, COL. 1

Seconds Do Count

Jeff Merryman, Captain, HSU

Everyone loves a good sports analogy, so try these on for size:

How would you like to be standing in line to register for your favorite 10K race, when you hear the starter's gun go off?

How would you like to be driving to the gym for a basketball game that already tipped off?

How would you like to be in the clubhouse lacing up your spikes while the opposing pitcher is already on the mound throwing strikes?

If your job involves structural firefighting, then any of these ridiculous analogies describe your assigned duties perfectly. Nobody publishes the time and date of your next fire on a schedule for you. Your company officer never begins the day by alerting you to the apartment fire you are scheduled to attend at 0837 hours, right after apparatus check-out and before PT. When was the last time your battalion chief called the firehouse at bedtime to remind everyone of the house fire that will kick off while you are all fast asleep? Unfortunately for firefighters, every “game” they ever “play” starts before they know there is a game to play.

So what's going on in that “game” nobody's told you about yet? The fire is growing and spreading beyond its point of origin, and creating potentially deadly conditions within the building. The fire is attacking the support system that allows the building to remain standing. The building occupants who are unable to escape are finding themselves increasingly exposed to the heat and smoke produced by the unchecked fire. Unfortunately for us, these problems are getting worse every second we are out of the game. Understanding this dynamic, it is easy to see how the element of time is something firefighters must do their best to control. From a safety standpoint, it is quite clear that the risks to firefighters become more significant and wide-ranging as the seconds pass.

There are built-in delays in our fire responses that we can do nothing about. Somebody has to become aware of the fire and decide that notifying the fire department would be a good idea. Dispatchers have to receive the 911 call, decipher and process the information they are getting, and then notify the

companies that will respond. Based on the situation and the factors surrounding the fire, this notification process can be relatively quick, or it can be amazingly slow—but the fact of the matter is that we can't do anything to speed it up. There are, however, many other time-related factors that we have the ability to control.

In the firehouse, how do you respond to the Zetron system? Do you take another couple of bites, before your leisurely stroll out to the apparatus? How long does it take you to get dressed? Is your PPE set out in a way that allows you to don it quickly, or do you have it in a jumbled pile on the apparatus



bay floor? The period between the activation of the Zetron system and the departure of the apparatus from the firehouse is one of the best opportunities we have to either trim some valuable seconds, or to make our situation worse by wasting time. Officers should constantly monitor the performance of their crews and should use drills to reduce turnout times, if necessary.

There is no doubt that we can make up some time while enroute to the incident—but not by slamming the gas pedal to the floor. The seconds we can save by going a few MPH faster, or flying through a stop sign can be quickly erased by slamming into a civilian vehicle, or rolling over while speeding through a sharp turn. The best way to reduce travel time is to know where we are going and the best travel route to take to get there. Slowing down to read street signs, taking the wrong driveway into a complex, or missing a turn altogether are all good ways to not only add to our time deficit, but also to let down other companies who are

counting on us to be in position. There is one skill that we use at every single incident we encounter: territory knowledge. Unfortunately, we don't always take the time to



make sure we know our area as well as we should.

Once we arrive at the incident, we are finally in position to start controlling the growing hazards, but there are still plenty of opportunities for us to waste valuable time. Do you know your assigned apparatus position, tools to carry, and area in which you will operate? If the incident commander has to tell you where to go, what to carry or what to do, you are wasting time. If your basic skills are not up to snuff, you can turn an operation that should take seconds into a five minute debacle. What is the fire doing while we are trying to figure out how to force the door, or untangling a poorly stretched attack line? What's going to happen to that first engine crew when their booster water runs out, and you are still trying to figure out how to get the hydrant open or how to charge your supply line? Basic skill training **IS** safety training—the quicker and more efficiently we perform our basic skills, the better our chances of avoiding injuries to ourselves and to those who are counting on us.

If we are going to do as much as we can to reduce firefighter injuries and deaths, we must understand the effect that delayed fire suppression has on our safety. Fire grows and spreads exponentially with every minute we waste—especially in newer, lighter buildings filled with increasingly volatile combustibles. The best way we can protect ourselves at fires is to turn out quickly, arrive at the scene without delay, and to execute fire-ground operations with the highest degree of speed and efficiency possible. We have to understand just how far behind we are when we are dispatched to a fire incident, and that the only way we will ever get back into the race is to save as much time as we can on the hundreds of “little things” that go into our response. 🚒

They Come In Threes

Many things come in threes. For the Alexandria Fire Department it was multi-alarm fires in October. On October 22 Alexandria faced one of the largest multi-alarm fires in recent history at the Virginia Theological Seminary (*See Fire In the Sky, Winter 2011*). While fire crews stood by through the night in the aftermath of the Theological Seminary fire, another fire erupted less than a mile away

down the roof; barely nicking a firefighter's boot as it crashed to the ground. The firefighter was uninjured and the crew regrouped to continue their fire attack.

Again, second alarm units arrived and due to the increased staffing on many Alexandria Fire companies and the use of large diameter hose crews

were able to efficiently attack the main fire while saving three exposures on different sides of the fire structure. 53 fire and EMS personnel were able to quickly contain and extinguish the fire. No one was



Smoke residue can still be seen on the underside of the 12th floor balcony. The fire started on the 11th floor balcony of this Whiting Street high rise.



Kirchner Court Fire—Units arrived to find the structure fully involved in fire.

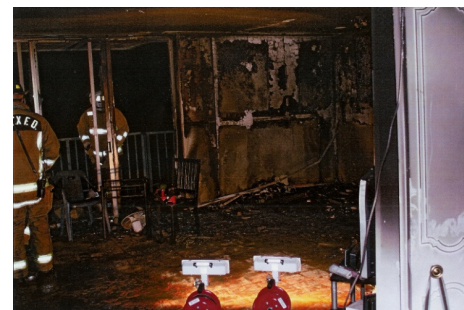
Photo by Andrea Buchanan

in the early morning of October 23 at a home on Kirchner Court. The crew from Engine Company 206, who had been released earlier from the Theological Seminary and finally settled down to rest when the alarm for Kirchner Court came in. Just a few blocks from Station 206, Engine 206 arrived quickly to find the million dollar home fully involved in fire. Once again, the tight configuration of the neighborhood presented vehicle access and apparatus placement issues as they did at the Theological Seminary. The close proximity of the homes on this street also created a fire exposure problem. Fire crews went to an exterior attack mode once they confirmed that no one was inside. Shortly after arriving at the scene and establishing an attack line near the front of the dwelling, the crew from Engine 206 heard the telltale sounds that a roof collapse was about to occur. As they backed away from the structure, one of the front dormer windows gave way and slid

injured in this fire and Fire Investigators worked the scene for several days with the assistance of fire crews which ultimately led to a fire cause determination as an accidental fire. Fire loss was estimated at almost \$400,000. Firefighters were able to save over \$100,000 in detached structures on the property as well as approximately \$1,000,000 in nearby dwellings that were threatened by the fire.

The third multi-alarm fire occurred eight days later on the 11th floor of an unsprinklered residential high-rise apartment building. The fire, which was reported shortly after 1:00 am on October 31, involved the exterior balcony and substantial involvement of the main living areas of the apartment. The fire originated on the exterior balcony and impinged upon a propane fuel cylinder stored in the area of the fire. The cylinder exploded, shattering the sliding glass door

and sending fire into the main living area. 63 fire and EMS personnel responded and were able to quickly attack and confine the fire to the apartment of origin. Once again, no one was injured in the incident and many of the building occupants were allowed to return home later that morning. Damages were estimated at \$55,000. However, over \$100,000 dollars in property in the immediate area of the fire was able to



The fire, once inside the dwelling did extensive damage to the interior unit but was prevented from spreading to adjacent apartments.

be saved by fire crews. Once again, AFD Investigators worked the incident and were able to determine the cause as accidental in nature.

Three multi-alarm fires over 9 days kept Alexandria fire crews and investigators very busy. The lack of injuries at any of these incidents combined with the large amount of property saved through use of increased staffing; use of large diameter hose; deploying efficient firefighting strategy and tactics; and follow up with complete and thorough investigations certainly kept significant incidents from getting worse. 🚒

EMS News

Doctor J. Benji Marfori Becomes New Medical Director.

Dr. J. Benji Marfori assumed the role of the Operational Medical Director in July 2010. He is Board Certified in Emergency Medicine and a Fellow of the American College of Emergency Physicians.

Dr. Marfori attended Medical School in Toledo at the Medical College of Ohio and completed his Emergency Medicine Residency at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center in Worcester. During his residency, he also served as a flight physician with New England Life Flight.

Upon finishing his residency in 2004, Dr. Marfori worked as an attending physician at Holyoke Medical Center in Holyoke, Massachusetts. He also served as an Adjunct Clinical Instructor with the Baystate Emergency Medicine Residency program and a member of Disaster Medical Assistance Team, DMAT-2.

Since moving to the area in 2006, Dr. Marfori practices primarily at Inova Alexandria Hospital but also staffs the Emergency Departments of Sibley Hospital, Prince William Hospital, Reston Hospital, and Heathcote Medical Center. He is also the Director of Emergency Ultrasound for Alexandria Emergency Department and a member to the hospital's Bioethics Committee.

Outside of work, Dr. Marfori enjoys the outdoors; rock climbing; racing vintage Porsches; and living locally in Del Ray.

Dr. Marfori and his wife recently welcomed their second child, his second daughter.

Peak Time Medic Unit to go in service in 2011

Alexandria Fire recently purchased two medic units from Horton Emergency Vehicles in Grove City, Ohio. The heavy duty units are expected to arrive in late December. They will display the new Department scheme of black roofs over red body. The vehicles were purchased as part of a peak time medic unit program that was approved with the FY2011 budget. When in service, Alexandria will staff one peak time medic unit seven days a week throughout the year. The unit will be located in the West end of the City and will concentrate on service delivery from late morning until early evening hours when EMS service demand is at it's greatest.



One of two new medic units to be assigned to the Peak Time Medic Unit program at on the assembly line at the factory.

Currently Alexandria is training fourteen EMS recruits who will graduate on January 14, 2011. The unit is anticipated to go in service on January 15, 2011. Five current paramedics will be assigned to the peak time unit. The 14 EMS recruits will back fill the five peak time positions as well as fill in vacancies from recent retirements.

New EMS Supervisors Hit the Street

The beginning of January saw a number of transfers due to the anticipated launch of the Peak Time Medic Unit program. Along with personnel transfers were promotions of several EMS employees to the position of EMS Supervisor. Congratulations go to Supervisor Michael Cahill (EMS232B), Supervisor John Rule (EMS232C), and Supervisor Kelsea Bonkoski (EMS232D). In addition, EMS Supervisor Martha Tuthill has been transferred and will oversee the new Peak Time Medic Units when they deploy later in January 2011.



EMS Supervisor Kelsea Bonkoski



EMS Supervisor Mike Cahill



EMS Supervisor John Rule

Lucas II CPR Device trail

The Department recently received two Lucas II CPR Device (made by Physio). The devices meet the current CPR guidelines of 100 compressions per minute. The Department will conduct a two month trial of the devices. Each device will be placed on the EMS Supervisor's vehicles. These units cost \$15,000. If the trail period proves successful, the Department will be looking at a lease agreement if approved for permanent use.



The Lucas II CPR Device.

Breaking Up is Hard to Do

Like the song by Neil Sedaka says "...*They say that breaking up is hard to do. Now I know, I know that it's true....*" For almost a quarter century the Office of Code Administration (formerly known as the Code Enforcement Bureau) has been a part of the Alexandria Fire Department. But beginning in the Spring of 2011 through the end of fiscal year 2011 (June 30, 2011), the Office of Building and Fire Code Administration (OBAFCA) will undergo organizational and budget structure changes required to sustain the new Department of Code Administration which was approved in late 2010. Rumors had been ongoing for some time but everything was finally made official on the morning of December 9, 2010 when Fire Chief Adam Thiel and Director John Catlett met with Code Administration staff and Fire Department members to officially announce the split and what it meant for all affected employees.

The relationship began back in late 1983 when the City merged the Police and Fire Departments into one agency called the Department of Public Safety. At the time of the merger, several other departments and City agencies were consolidated into the Code Enforcement Bureau which operated under the Fire Operations Division. The Code Enforcement Bureau originally consisted of staff from the City's Building Department, the Alexandria Fire Marshal's Office and inspections staff from the Office of Housing's Community Standards Unit. At that time the City Manager appointed a Director to oversee the new Bureau. The Building Official and the Chief Fire Marshal were made Deputy Directors of the agency which then oversaw all building functions from cradle to grave. Over the years management and the organizational structure changed many times. New focus and ideas came forward. Training, retraining and cross training occurred. Even after the Department of Public Safety was split apart and reorganized back into the Fire and Police Departments we know today, OBAFCA remained intact. But in the end, economic impacts created opportunities to rethink the agency's mission as well as ways to incorporate new efficiencies to deal with many issues in the City. After almost 28 years, the decision to create a separate department of

Code Administration was approved by the City Manager.

Under the reorganization, nineteen employees will remain with the Alexandria Fire Department. These employees include all Fire Marshals, Systems Retesting Inspectors and the Fire Protection Systems Supervisor. The role of the Fire Official, which rested with the Director of OBAFCA, will be retained within the Fire Department. With the departure of Director Catlett, a new Assistant Fire Chief will be hired to oversee the new Fire Prevention and Life Safety Division (FPLSD) and be a member of the Fire Department E-Team. This Division will be responsible for fire code enforcement, fire systems retesting and trouble shooting, and incident investigations. The FPLSD will form a closer working relationship with the Department's Fire and EMS companies to more effectively address fire prevention related matters. During evenings, weekends and holidays, the FPLSD duty staff will be one of the primary contacts for nuisance and other quality of life issues and will handle each situation initially before transferring the matter over to the appropriate agency the following work day.

The new Department of Code Administration will oversee the plan review, construction, and renovation of structures in the City. In addition, the new department will maintain a Maintenance Code Division headed by a Division Chief. A staff of inspectors (formerly Fire Inspectors) will handle property maintenance, hoarding, and nuisance codes while maintaining close working relationships with the communities they are assigned to.

The Fire Department and the Department of Code Administration are committed to maintaining a close working relationship. A series of Memorandums of Understanding are being prepared to ensure all aspects of the former OBAFCA responsibilities are handled efficiently and seamlessly at all times of the day or night.

These changes will certainly be significant to many and will take time to adapt to. However, change is inevitable and these organizational changes took many months of discussions which included equipment allocation, personnel, budgets, and ongoing service and

maintenance functions. What took 28 years to make was not easy to separate; especially when many functions were very integrated into the Fire Department. In the end, this decision is in the best interests of the City and will provide improved services to the community. But it was not an easy decision to make. Breaking Up Is Hard To Do.✱

SAVE THE DATE



The Alexandria Chamber of
Commerce 2011 Public
Safety Valor Awards
Ceremony

Tuesday, April 26, 2011
Alexandria Hilton Mark
Center Hotel

More Information to Come...

New Faces, Old Places

Over the past several months Fire Administration has brought on board a number of new staff. Please welcome the following employees to the Fire Department:

Matt Bosse

Matt was hired at the end of October and is



the Fiscal Officer II for the Department. Matt oversees the department's budget and expenditures as well as tracking the numerous grants the Department has. Matt comes to Alexandria from Wake County, North Carolina where he served as a budget analyst for one and a half years in the County Manager's Office. Prior to that time Matt worked as a budget analyst for the City of Virginia Beach. Matt holds a Bachelor's Degree from the University of Maryland—College Park and a Masters Degree from the University of North Carolina—Chapel Hill.

In his off time Matt enjoys a number of outdoor activities.

Matt oversees a staff of three including a Fiscal Officer I, Admin Support V, and Fiscal Assistant.

Larosa Farmer

Many of you may know Larosa from her previous time with the Department. Larosa



has returned as an Admin Support V, overseeing Ambulance Billing and assisting with Accounts Payable after spending a year with Arlington County as an Ambulance Billing Specialist. Prior to working in Arlington, Larosa worked for the Alexandria Fire Department as a Secretary II for 3 years. She is a graduate of T.C. Williams High School and is continuing her studies at Northern Virginia Community College where her focus is on Accounting and Business.

When not working for the department, Larosa enjoys spending time with her family, cooking and singing. She is also a member of the City Choir.

Mayouri Middough



Mayouri came on board as the Department's Fiscal Officer I at the end of October. Prior to joining Alexandria, Mayouri worked for 6 years as an Accountant III with the Fairfax County Fire Department's Urban Search and Rescue Team. Prior to working in Fairfax, Mayouri resided in South Africa where she was employed as an accountant. Mayouri holds a Bachelor's Degree in Business Economics from Trinity University and a Masters of Business Administration Degree from Southeastern University.

When not working for the Fire Department, Mayouri enjoys spending time with her family and reading.

Welcome Matt, Larosa and Mayouri. Please stop by and say hello to each of them when you are at Fire Headquarters.

EAP for Fire Department Personnel

A new EAP contract is currently in effect that will allow Fire Department personnel to receive up to 8 EAP one-on-one sessions for counseling and assistance relating to behavioral health issues.

Because our occupation exposes us to traumatic events, we need a special counselor who understands and can more effectively deal with the many potentially emotional/psychological impacts from which we may suffer.

This will be a subcontracted service with New Millennium administered by Ms. Dodie Gill. We have already had good and effective services from her organization.

Ms. Gill is a proven professional with effective experience in:

- Sexual Harassment
- Conflict Resolution
- Diversity
- Team Building
- Trauma Exposure and PTSD
- CISM Training and Critical Incident Stress Debriefings
- Behavioral Health Emergency Preparedness

When you as an individual call the INOVA EAP line (1-800-346-0110), you would inform the counselor that you are with AFD and INOVA will route your call to New Millennium.

This EAP service is for all AFD personnel and their families.

I welcome and look forward to a more effective EAP program for AFD.

Please note that except for the one-on-one individual referrals, any such engagement of New Millennium EAP services such as Supervisory Referrals, Risk Assessments, Group Counseling, etc. must be coordinated through the Fire Human Resources Manager, Manny Herrera III, SPHR, IPMA-CP at 703-736-5239 or via email manuel.herrera@alexandriava.gov. 📧

Community Engagement

During the Fall, Alexandria Fire Department staff were out and about performing a variety of community engagement activities.



Firefighter Tina Earley accepts some contributions from Alexandria's smallest residents during the Fill The Boot campaign.

Fill The Boot

Alexandria Fire Department personnel collected over \$3500 on September 1 which kicked off the Muscular Dystrophy Association's (MDA) national campaign to "Fill the Boot". This year's event ran for four days ending on Saturday, September 4. On and off duty fire and EMS personnel gathered at various locations throughout the City soliciting donations to the MDA. Turnout of staff and the generosity of the community were worth all the effort. At the end of the four day event, members collected \$17,545 for the charity. Many people were involved from either participating at the event to those that organized and helped with logistics.

Remember 9-11



Fire Chief Adam Thiel speaks to the audience with his daughter Sophie at his side. Photo by A. Hildebrant

On Saturday, September 11, members from Alexandria's Fire and Police Departments and the Office of the Sheriff gathered at the Masonic Temple to remember the ninth anniversary of the attacks on the Twin Towers, Pentagon and Somerset, Pennsylvania.

The solemn ceremony was held on the steps of the Masonic Temple, overlooking downtown Alexandria. Mayor William D. Euille, members of City Council and the City Manager's Office attended the event as well as several State elected representatives.

Police Chief Earl Cook and Fire Chief Adam Thiel spoke at the event in as well as Lieutenant Shelbert Williams on behalf of Sheriff Dana Lawhorne. Retired Fire Department employee Callie Terrell sang the National Anthem and God Bless America. Assistant Fire Marshal William Coates conducted the invocation. The event concluded with the Return to Quarters bell ringing and the playing of taps.

Several hundred people attended the event held on a clear, sunny afternoon. As each year passes, it is even more important to never forget those who gave their lives on that day helping other or who were innocent victims of that terrible tragedy.

Remembering the Fallen and Promoting Fire Safety



Department members and guests gather at Ivy Hill Cemetery to honor the Department's Fallen Firefighters. Photo by S. Saltsgaver.

October was a very busy month for the Department. Fire, EMS and CSU staff visited 22 public and private schools distributing hundreds of pieces of fire prevention literature and speaking with various ages of school children on the importance of fire safety. In addition, the Department conducted 8 outreach programs to business and community groups; visited 9 pre-schools and supported four community events.

The Department also hosted the annual Fire



USFA Acting Director Glenn Gaines speaks to the audience. Photo by S. Saltsgaver.

Department Memorial Service at Ivy Hill Cemetery on October 8. Acting U.S. Fire Administration Administer Glenn A. Gaines gave the keynote address at the ceremony. The Department honored seven fallen comrades during the ceremony who passed away in the previous year.

The biggest highlight of the month were the



Station 203's open house. Photo by P. Misiti

Fire Station Open Houses which were held on October 9. All Fire Stations were open to the public from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm.



Station 207's open house. Photo by P. Misiti

SEE OUTREACH, PAGE 8, COL. 3

Sky From Page 1.

further igniting materials.

The fire presented many challenges to the Department that day. Limited access to place apparatus and close distances between structures created a need to address the main fire structure in addition to exposure protection of the adjacent structures, all of which were considered historic. Several factors aided in the success of bringing this fire under control. First, the implementation of large diameter hose aided crews in getting more water to the incident and onto the fire faster than with previous smaller supply lines. Second, the fact that the majority of the fire companies were staffed with four persons allowed for more efficient use of staff and equipment at the scene. More firefighters were on scene earlier allowing many tasks to be assigned and completed sooner than if firefighters had to wait for more apparatus and staffing to arrive. This early intervention was critical to the success of fire ground operations. Also, because of increased staffing, less apparatus was required to fight the fire which greatly reduced the potential for added congestion at an already tight location. "Because of the safe and effective firefighting operations by Alexandria and our partner jurisdictions, we were able to save the adjacent historic structures as well as a number of irreplaceable religious artifacts," said Alexandria Fire Chief Adam Thiel.

While the main fire was declared under control by the evening hours, the incident remained active for several more days. Early on it was evident that the scale of the incident would require additional investigative resources to determine the cause of the fire. Shortly after the fire began, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) was contacted for assistance. ATF responded quickly and activated their National Response Team (NRT) to assist investigators. Over the following 24 hours, team members arrived and set up an investigation command post. Thirty two ATF investigators and support staff joined a team of Alexandria Investigators to begin the task of determining where and how the fire started. Over the next five days the combined team

of AFD Investigators and ATF Agents sorted, sifted and combed through tons of fire debris. Debris was removed, documented, photographed and tagged. Heavy equipment was brought in to remove large sections of collapsed roof. Interviews were conducted with dozens of witnesses and staff from the Seminary. Theories were developed and then tested by a team of ATF researchers. Rooms were reconstructed and hypothesis developed based on those reconstructions. In the end, after a very methodical and thorough investigation, the cause was determined to be accidental.

While the loss was devastating to the community, no one was injured in the blaze. In addition, because of the effectiveness of fire ground tactics and sufficient staffing, a number of historic artifacts were saved and removed from the structure; many during the course of the investigation. The Department experienced a positive and productive working relationship with ATF and the NRT members. The NRT integrated AFD investigators into the NRT where they worked alongside each other in a seamless operation. The experience provided valuable insight and experience to both AFD staff and NRT members. Because the NRT brought an abundance of resources to the scene, it enabled the large scale investigation to proceed quickly and be resolved in days rather than weeks. "This investigation highlights what happens when investigators work together with a common goal in mind," said ATF National Response Team Special Agent in Charge Willie Brownlee. "Our agents and laboratory personnel worked seamlessly with the Alexandria Fire Department and Fire Marshal's Office to determine the cause of the fire that damaged the historic chapel at the Virginia Theological Seminary, which has special meaning and memories for many people."

The fate of the Chapel now remains in the hands of the Virginia Theological Seminary. "We grieve the loss of a building that has witnessed many holy moments and which has meant so much to so many people worldwide, but we trust that however strange things look at this particular moment, love will triumph. God will triumph. We will triumph. And soon a worship space at this Seminary will emerge

Ph.D., dean and president of Virginia Seminary.

The 1881 Gothic chapel at Virginia Seminary meant many things to many people before the fire. And while the fire was a great loss to the community, the community took comfort in the professionalism and care demonstrated by the fire department and ATF as they not only extinguished the fire and saved several adjacent structures, but also brought some closure to the Theological Seminary through a very detailed and comprehensive investigation into the cause of the fire. 🚒

Outreach, From Page 7.

Over 3500 citizens visited the fire stations during this period. A variety of activities were offered at each station. Some of these included: Station and apparatus tours; blood pressure checks; technical rescue displays; child ID programs; fire prevention safety quizzes; amusement devices; house fire simulators; educational games and more. The weather cooperated, providing attendees with mild temperatures under bright sunny skies.

Feedback was very positive and the Department is planning to conduct more open houses in May for EMS Week as well as Fire Prevention Week next Fall.

2010 YMCA Food Drive

On November 23, Department staff joined members of the Black Fire Service Professionals of Alexandria and Alexandria Fire-



Department Members prepare bags of food for the 2010 YMCA Food Drive. Photo by R. Robinson.

fighters Local 2141 to participate in the annual YMCA holiday food drive. Members joined YMCA staff and volunteers and assembled bags of food items which were later distributed to needy families for the Thanksgiving holiday.

The afternoon effort yielded a large number of food packages for families in the Alexandria area.

Toys for the Needy

During the month of December, the members participated a several activities to provide toys and clothing to needy children during the Christmas holiday.

On December 22, the Black Fire Service Professionals of Alexandria (BFSPA) concluded their annual toy drive. The month long event yielded needed clothing, coats, gloves and toys for over 140 children. Donations went to families at the Women's Shelter and the ALIVE Child Development Center.

Over 90 children participated in the BFSPA holiday party where they received their holiday presents.

The Department once again participated in the annual toy drive which focused on providing toys for Alexandria Hospital's Pediatric Ward. The event, which was organized by Firefighter Mike Chandler, collected new, unused toys for pediatric patients receiving care at the hospital during the holidays. Paramedic Chip Meyers assumed the role of Santa and with the assistance of AFD staff, made the delivery of toys to the hospital, much to the delight of many seriously ill children.

Finally, the Department participated with many of our jurisdictional partners in the annual Toys For Tots Toy Drive. Captain Thurston McClain and Lieutenant Henry Cook organized and collected many new and unused toys for the Marine Corps. The POD provided by the Marines was packed full at least twice. Donations were collected on December 21. However donations continued to flow in and the Department continued to collect toys through the first week of January. The additional toys have been turned over to the Marines who will use them throughout the year and as a base for the 2011 toy drive.

Congratulations to everyone for all the efforts provided in November and December for the area's needy families.

Great Weather for Annual Christmas Walk

On Saturday, December 4, Fire Chief Adam Thiel, accompanied by his daughter Sophie and the Department's Honor Guard took part in the annual Campagna Center's Scottish Christmas Walk. Bright, sunny skies greeted the parade participants as they



Fire Chief Adam Thiel and daughter Sophie at the annual Scottish Christmas Walk Parade.

Photo by Louise Krafft, Alexandria Gazette

kicked off the holiday season in Alexandria. The event drew approximately 30,000 spectators.

Photos with Santa



Again this year Firefighters Local 2141 with support from

the Department offered photos with Santa Claus at Fire Station 201 in Old Town. The event is an annual fundraiser by Local 2141 which raises money for their Helping Hands Fund. The fund provides support for members who suffer a tragic event in their life.

Department Reaches Out to Community to Address Carbon Monoxide

On November 29 Medics were dispatched to a home on Ancell Street for a sickness call. Upon their arrival the medics quickly determined that the incident was more than a sickness; the victims were suffering from Carbon Monoxide poisoning. Additional resources responded and firefighters discovered high levels of Carbon Monoxide in three homes. Several children were transported to area hospitals. Fortunately, all the children were evaluated and released later that afternoon. The affected homes were ventilated and investigators discovered the cause to be faulty ventilation of a gas appliance. The home where the incident occurred did not have a Carbon Monoxide detector, but one of the adjacent homes did and it was sounding when firefighters arrived.

The incident set into motion a number of outreach efforts designed to get the word out to the community on the dangers of Carbon Monoxide (CO) and the importance of installing Carbon Monoxide detectors. A number of interviews with the media were conducted, not just to report the event, but to discuss and educate the viewing audiences on CO and CO detection. A CO website was developed and put on line which provided a number of details about the dangers of CO and the use of CO detectors. The website and its information were then pushed out into a number of social media forums to include Facebook and Twitter.

Several follow up media pieces were done with the City and the Mayor to underscore the importance of CO detection. Finally, a door to door effort was conducted under the direction of Battalion Chief Joe Hoffmaster in one of the communities where there was a large number of CO related calls. The program involved contacting the civic association in advance and setting aside several hours that weekend. Fire and EMS personnel, equipped with CO outreach materials went door to door in the community, handing out materials, speaking with residents and checking homes for CO levels with special monitors. Staff also offered other fire prevention tips during the course of the outreach effort which included over 1,000 homes.

While CO will continue to be a concern in the Nation, hopefully these outreach efforts have had a positive effect in reducing the number of CO calls in the Alexandria community. 🚒

Awards and Recognition

Meritorious Service Medal

On September 8 members of the Department traveled to Richmond, Virginia to attend the Commonwealth Public Safety Medal of Valor and Meritorious Service Medal Ceremony. The event was held in the Old House Chamber of the Virginia State Capital. Three public safety personnel were presented medals by Virginia Governor Robert F. McDonnell. One of the recipients was Firefighter Doug Townshend who was recognized for his heroic efforts in saving the life of his brother during a house fire that occurred on March 13, 2009. For his efforts, Firefighter Townshend was awarded the Commonwealth Meritorious Service Medal.



Virginia Governor Robert F. McDonnell presents Firefighter Doug Townshend with the Commonwealth Meritorious Service Medal.

Other awardees included Trooper Kurt J. Johnson who was awarded the Commonwealth Medal of Valor for his efforts in rescuing a 15 month old child from a burning vehicle on the Eastern Shore of Virginia and Tactical Team Medic Jeffrey G. Yates of the Portsmouth Police Department who was awarded the Commonwealth Meritorious Service Medal for his efforts in treating several injured police officers while under fire from a mentally ill subject at a hostage standoff.

The award ceremony was sponsored by the Virginia Public Safety Foundation.

Congratulations Doug!

Employee Obtains IPMA-CP Credentials.

In September the Department was notified that Bobbie Soto, Human Resources Technician I received international recognition for obtaining the level of Certified Professional from the International Public Management Association (IPMA). The IPMA-CP designation is awarded to individuals who have met the professional standards set forth by the IPMA which recognizes excellence in public sector human resources as demonstrated to a panel of senior level public sector professionals. Congratulations Bobbie!

Fire Station Receives Original Artwork

Personnel from Station 205 attended at reception of November 16 hosted Old Town artist Leisa Collins who presented an original painting by her of Fire Station 205 on Cameron Street. The reception was in recognition of the Fire Department employees and all they do for the community.

Battalion Chief Robert Robinson, Captain



The crew of Engine and Medic 205 receive an original artwork from local artist Leisa Collins. Pictured l to r: F/F Vernon Murphy, Camille Leverett, F/F Thomas Robinson III, Artist Leisa Collins, Capt. Gerald Fair, Batt. Chief Robert Robinson and Medic Fiona Apple.

Jay Fair and the crews of Engine Company and Medic 205 were on hand to receive the painting.

The artwork now proudly hangs in Station 205.

Members Receive Sons of the American Revolution Medals

On December 16 two members of the Department were awarded medals by the Sons of the American Revolution (SAR). Paramedic Matt Strauss received the SAR Emergency Medical Services Commendation Medal for his outstanding professional

skill and response June 17, 2010, in the treatment of an injured citizen.

Outreach Specialist Patsieann Misiti was presented the SAR Fire Safety Commendation Medal for her extensive efforts to promote fire



SAR Medal Awards. Pictured l to r: Fire Chief Adam Thiel, Paramedic Matt Strauss, Outreach Specialist Patsieann Misiti and Chapter President COL. Robert F. Carr.

safety within the community and region.

The awards were presented by George Washington Chapter President COL Robert F. Carr at a meeting of Fire Department staff. Congratulations Matt and Patsieann!

Employees Complete Crisis Intervention Team Training.

Assistant Fire Marshal William Coates, Deputy Fire Marshal John Javelle and 15 others completed the City Crisis Intervention Team training conducted by the Alexandria Community Services Board.

Staff receive 40 hours of specialized training in the recognition of psychiatric disorders, suicide intervention, substance abuse issues, verbal de-escalation techniques, the role of the family in the care of a person with mental illness, and legal training in mental health and substance abuse issues.

Unlike most CIT programs around the nation which are comprised solely of police officers, Alexandria's program includes representation from all first responding agencies to ensure that a comprehensive, City-wide approach is in place to assist citizens with mental illness.

Congratulations go out to Bill and John! 🚒

Fall 2010 Communications Statistics (September through November)

FIRE ALARM HEADQUARTERS CALLS PROCESSED	
911	3,516
Administration Received	13,345
Administration Dialed	4,742
Dispatched Calls	4,509
Total calls	26,112

Fall 2010 Run Statistics (September through November)

	Unit	EMS	SUP	TOTAL	Current Yr	Previous Yr
Station 201	E201	132	192	324	1254	1439
Station 202	M202	463	135	598	2150	2250
Station 203	E203	157	167	325	1168	1212
	T203	44	209	254	2146	2215
Total		201	376	579	3314	3427
Station 204	E204	151	179	330	1318	1375
	T204	33	308	341	1141	1451
Total		184	487	671	2459	2826
Station 205	E205	176	321	497	1930	2105
	M205	597	177	774	2882	3045
Total		773	498	1271	4812	5150
Station 206	E206	211	244	455	1838	2139
	M206	495	133	628	2611	2863
	R206	24	47	71	457	409
Total		730	424	1154	4906	5411
Station 207	E207	216	254	471	2007	2171
	M207	451	108	559	2249	2523
Total		667	362	1030	4256	4694
Station 208	E208	335	312	647	2742	2944
	M208	543	142	685	2773	3026
	T208	52	276	328	1414	1465
Total		930	730	1660	6929	7435
Station 209	E209	154	216	320	1388	256
	H209	0	9	9	51	16
	S209	7	110	117	456	75
Total		161	335	446	1895	347
Station totals		4241	3539	7733	31,975	32,979

HOT Shots



Firefighters attack a fire in the Chapel at the Virginia Theological Seminary. Inc.# 10-16008



Ladder truck operations continue at the VTS Chapel into the night. Inc.# 10-16008



Aftermath of the VTS Fire. Inc#10-16008



AFD's Rehab bus stood by during the VTS fire. Inc.#10-16008



Above and below: AFD and ATF NRT members work together to determine the cause of the VTS chapel fire. Inc.#10-16008



F/F J. Harrison and Capt. W. Bryant speak with 4th graders about in home smoke detectors.



F/F R. Grayson demonstrates firefighting equipment to students.



AFD members gathered at Station 209 to bid farewell to Fire Communications staff who depart in January to become part of the Department of Emergency Communications.



ECT Supervisors C. Ponce, N. Hanson and M. Keske, along with ECT's S. Benarick, and M. Dewalt gather with friends and family members at Station 209.



Fire Headquarters staff host a holiday celebration for the cleaning staff from the Alexandria Workshop in December.